Who did this to you?

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Who did this to you?

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Summary

The last time Garrus saw Commander Shepard was only the night before, but she always came by to see him in the morning. Shepard was the last person he expected to break a routine. Something didn't feel right.

Notes

Whumptober Day 3!! This is my first time writing Mass Effect fic, and I can confidently say it won't be my last.
Come say hi in the comments! — may the multifandom experience continue, and see you all tomorrow :)

The last time Garrus saw Commander Shepard was only the night before. The squad returned from a routine supply pickup on Omega and all went their separate ways once back on the Normandy.

He wouldn't think anything of it, but Shepard always saw him before 0900. She'd sweep through engineering and the crew quarters before ending up in the main battery with him for a few short moments.

He opened the door to the battery and stuck his head out.

"Gardner!" He yelled for the mess sergeant's attention.

Garrus watched as the man came into view from behind the kitchen bar.

"Officer Vakarian," he returned a curt greeting.

"Have you put eyes on the commander yet this morning?" He figured Gardner was the best place to start. Even if her schedule was thrown off for the first time Garrus could remember, she had to eat something eventually.

"Can't say I have."

Garrus' subvocals rumbled with disapproval. He gave the man a sharp nod before turning back into the battery and closing the door behind him.

He paced the floor of the battery, thinking over where she could possibly be. There was likely nothing to worry about. They were scheduled to be docked in Omega for another day, but Shepard was the last person he expected to break a routine. Something didn't feel right.

"EDI?"

The AI's hologram popped up in the front corner of the room, and Garrus continued to pace.

"Officer Vakarian. I'm reading higher than average stress levels from your biometric data. Might I suggest going to see Dr. Chakwas."

Garrus rolled his eyes at the suggestion. EDI always did that to him. Rationally, he should probably be grateful to have someone looking out for him at all times, but he had other things in mind. He hoped this line of inquiry would be more informative than the last.

"Can you tell me the last time Commander Shepard accessed her cabin?" He cringed as he finished speaking. It sounded like information much too personal to request once he put it out there.

"Commander Shepard's quarters were last accessed at 0737 standard. Would you like additional data on this access, Officer Vakarian?"

EDI's question was leading. She never was quite as subtle as she attempted to be. Garrus tended to find that specific quirk endearing.

He gave her an affirmative answer to which she responded in telling him that the most recent access to Shepard's quarters was an arrival, not a departure. She continued to reveal that the previous access was at 2315 standard — a departure.

Garrus thanked her for the help, and logged himself out.

So, Shepard spent a night off of the Normandy. Sure it wasn't her usual, but everyone needed to blow off steam sometime. Something still didn't feel quite right. It was approaching 1000, a long time after her apparent arrival. With the no-frills outlook of his Commander, Garrus had a hard time believing she was taking all that time to freshen up for a new day.

He bit the bullet and headed out of the battery in his civvies, punching in for the captain's quarters once he stepped inside the elevator. When he stepped out and was faced with Shepard's door he started to think maybe disturbing her wouldn't be such a good idea. He forced himself to shake the feeling off, walking up and down the short corridor a few times to clear his head.

When he knocked he was surprised to see the door open without question. He'd expected it to be locked.

In contrast to the bright lights in the hall, the lights in the cabin itself were dimmed. The glow of the fish tank in the wall outshined them as the door slid shut to cut off the harsh fluorescents.

He didn't find her at her desk, but he could just barely see the outline of someone under the covers in her bed. When he stepped down into the recessed bedroom he nearly kicked her N7 chest plate across the floor. Upon further inspection, all of her armor was scattered haphazardly around the bed.

At her bedside he took a knee and reached out rustle her from her sleep, choosing to place a hand on her shoulder. It was like waking the dead. The small noise that escaped her as she stretched out her legs went right through Garrus.

"Hey," he whispered, trying to get her attention while also keeping her calm.

She rolled onto her side and propped herself up with an elbow. He watched as she tried to blink her eyes into focus in the dark by sheer force of will and chose not to analyze why he found that so endearing.

His visor glowed in the darkness of the room, and she recognized him immediately. She almost seemed to shrink away from him, which was the last thing he wanted.

"Hey, Garrus." Shepard's greeting was uncertain. Her voice low and ragged.

When she flicked the light on overhead he realized why. Shepard had two black eyes, the bruises flaring out to her temple and stemming from what looked like a broken nose. There

was a jagged cut at the corner of her mouth that ran through both her top and bottom lip. He briefly recognized it as similar to the scar she used to bear when they'd met, but shook off the sick feeling that accompanied it. It was enough to make him afraid of what he'd find elsewhere.

"Spirits, Shepard. *Who did this to you?*"

Shepard took a deep breath, knowing that she couldn't avoid an honest answer, and any concern that was brewing in the back of Garrus' mind was brought to the forefront.

"When I was on Earth, before N7 — even before the Alliance, I ran with a street gang called the Tenth Street Reds. I was only sixteen, too young to join the military, and the children's home I was staying at wasn't reliable. I needed to provide for myself, so I stuck with them until I could enlist. They were never more than a bunch of lost souls doing what they could to get by, but apparently that's changed."

She paused to push herself into a seated position and Garrus pulled his hand away. When she finally settled herself, her legs framed him where he was kneeling and her blanket slid down to her lap. Only in a sports bra, her bare midriff was exposed to him, and Garrus saw the extent of just how beaten up she actually was.

A wry smile forced its way onto Shepard's face. Garrus watched as the stretch of it pulled on the cut that had only just scabbed over in an attempt to start healing.

"I never thought to mention them to anyone because I never saw them as a significant part of my life. With them, I got by — nothing more. But apparently they got wind of my successes, and when I accepted my bid for Spectre one of their reps cornered me on the Citadel.

"I didn't think anything of it at the time, but they wanted my help and I wouldn't do it. My affiliation with them was firmly in my past. I didn't even know they expanded their operation beyond Earth, let alone to Omega. They got the jump on me last night. Payback for leaving them behind, I guess."

Shepard hung her head, ashamed to be so caught off guard. She was supposed to be better than that.

Garrus could feel the disappointment roll off of her in waves. His subvocals trilled against the feeling, but went unnoticed even by her cybernetics.

"Shepard—"

"I didn't even really have a good reason to go back to the market, and I should've known better than to walk through Omega by myself— especially at that hour. I just couldn't stop thinking about that Turian ship model that I saw—"

Garrus watched as her face turned a delicate shade of pink, his visor providing him with the information that revealed that this sort of thing happened to humans when they were embarrassed. He couldn't listen to her ramble on in the throes of self deprecation, so he took the risk of cutting her off in return.

“It’s okay.” He waged a brief risk assessment before giving into the urge to bring a hand up to tip up her chin to face him again. He brushed over the cut on her lip and combed his fingers into her hair, staying mindful of the sharp edge of his talons. She leaned into his touch.

“There was no way you could have known about them. Even beside that, it was bold of them to think they could take you down — especially after how Aria has received you,” Garrus laughed, mostly at himself. “As someone who was the target of Aria’s ire, they’ve made a big mistake. This *will* get back to her. She doesn’t take gangs or merc groups that try to hide from her lightly.”

He felt Shepard nod into his hand, accepting his assessment for what it was.

“I should really get you down to the med bay so Chakwas can get a look at your—” He trailed off. “Everything.”

He listened as Shepard hummed, considering the suggestion. She pulled her legs back up under herself and leaned back, dragging Garrus with her. The unexpected jolt caused him to let out a squawk that he’d never admit to making.

Once he was laid out flat on the bed he held his breath as Shepard wrapped herself around him, laying her head down on his shoulder. He could feel the brush of her lips against his neck and thanked the Spirits that he never considered putting his armor on before finding her.

“Not yet.” Shepard’s voice betrayed just how tired she really was. “Maybe later.”

And Garrus? Well he never really was one to argue with the wishes of his CO.

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